



Reexamining the Role of the Guard and Reserves in Support to Civilian Authorities

Assessing the Evolving Relationship of the National Guard Bureau With Other Department of Defense Organizations in Responding to Crises

BY COLONEL (RET.) SCOTT FORSTER AND PROFESSOR BERT TUSSING

On 28 & 29 May 2008, the United States Army War College conducted the 7th annual Reserve Component Symposium at the Center for Strategic Leadership at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Among other issues, symposium-workshop participants were charged with assessing the evolving relationship of the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to other Department of Defense (DoD) organizations which have domestic crisis response requirements. For the sake of this discussion, DoD organizations which share a crisis response with NGB were limited to the States' National Guard, USNORTHCOM, the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. While each organization will be addressed in turn, there were several recurring discussion themes associated with all four.

ISSUES OF SHARED CONCERN

While first responders are busy providing for the needs of their communities following disasters, they do not need to be overburdened with superfluous information requirements. Competing concerns for updates and evolving requirements are certainly predictable at all levels of government; but constantly interrupting crisis response efforts for the sake of feeding "the information beast" is well beyond frustrating for the men and women serving at the site of an incident. Seeds of institutional patience that can rise above these interruptions may be planted well ahead of the events. Established and practiced relationships among the diverse stakeholders that share responsibilities for response and recovery operations can result in moderating reporting requirements, and ultimately contribute to the unity of effort that is essential in these regimes. Moreover, these practiced relationships will allow stakeholders at all levels to anticipate and provide for needs at the site of the disaster, which will always be "local."

As states support their own localities, other states may respond in keeping with their pre-emergency agreements, the most notable of which are the Emergency Management Assistant Compacts (EMACs). This civil-military state support



*Colonel (Ret.) Forster, is an Operations Research Analyst in the Science and Technology Division of CSL.
Professor Tussing is the Director of the Homeland Defense and Security Issues Group, OGD, CSL.*

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can occur simultaneously as Defense Coordinating Officers (DCOs) help DoD senior leadership validate requests for federal military assistance. Beyond the necessity for state-federal military coordination, however, is an overarching need to synchronize planning and response efforts with interagency partners.

Participants attempted to denote a difference between “disasters” and “catastrophes.” While current definitions were not universally satisfying in providing for this distinction,¹ members of the workshop held that the threshold to catastrophe was being reached as abilities of state and local responders were immediately overwhelmed. In these circumstances, members believed that a “regional organizational construct” needs to be examined as a potential means for meeting the most urgent needs encountered in the wake of a catastrophic domestic incident. The existing FEMA Region design was suggested as one model for this construct, but members were quick to assert that disasters (to say nothing of catastrophes) frequently show a proclivity toward ignoring political boundaries. Accordingly, whatever model that may be developed will have to simultaneously invest a great deal of planning and flexibility in meeting extraordinary requirements.

Two additional themes which struck a common concern among the target stakeholders had to do with funding. Participants noted a requirement for DoD to become “NIMS compliant”—which is to say aligned with the National Incident Management System—and complete their resource typing of capabilities in keeping with Homeland Security Presidential Directives 5 and 8. Also tied to fiscal considerations was what workshop members held to be a greater, albeit unfunded requirement for state and local stakeholders participation in national level exercises. Neither of these concerns were viewed as “show stoppers” at the forum, but workshop participants held them to be of sufficient importance to merit further attention in state and federal budget discussions.

ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE NGB AND ITS PARTNERS IN RESPONSE

Beyond discussions of common concern to the states’ National Guard, USNORTHCOM, the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the workshop’s participants examined steps that have been and will be taken to strengthen the relationship between each of these and the National Guard Bureau.

THE BUREAU AND THE STATES’ NATIONAL GUARD

In an effort to tame the “information beast” there have been ongoing efforts and great progress made in standardizing reporting requirements for the National Guard’s new Joint Information Exchange Environment (JIEE).² Utilizing this system, which is up and operational between the Bureau and all 54 states and territories, the states have a mechanism for rapidly portraying both operational capabilities and shortfalls. A specific example of these efforts was developed among some states historically victimized by hurricanes. Through matrices portrayed via the JIEE, local, state, and federal response capabilities can be tailored to make changing and dynamic requirements discernible to all. Members of the forum opined that tailoring a similar set of matrices from an “all-hazard” perspective could garner like benefits across the spectrum of response to natural or man-made disasters. Additionally, participants pointed to accompanying efforts by each of the states and territories to establish a 24/7 Joint Operations Center (JOC) capability as a means of strengthening information flow following a disaster/catastrophe. Combined with the JIEE, and linked through the Bureau’s own Joint Operations Center (JOC), this network can be postured to provide greatly enhanced response and recovery operations across the board. The JIEE-JOC construct can serve not only to link the Guard’s response to an incident, but could (as necessary) facilitate cooperation and coordination efforts with federal military response efforts orchestrated by USNORTHCOM. Finally, a natural extension to the civil component response to disaster could be affected by integrating this envisioned capability with national-level databases that track civilian capabilities provided and received through the EMAC

How the National Guard would continue to fund these initiatives—and indeed expand upon the same—was left unresolved in the workshop’s discussions. Participants conceded that this would have to be a shared burden, but time constraints surrounding the symposium did not allow for discussions into how that burden would be balanced against the state and federal governments.

1. See, for instance, the National Response Framework definition for catastrophic incident: “Any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions.” Participants held that “extraordinary levels” did not connote a sufficient distinction to launch more robust response and recovery operations, such as those envisioned for a multi-state/regional response.
2. Joint Information Exchange Environment, <http://www.ksikoniag.com/Achievements/JIEE/tabid/63/Default.aspx>

THE BUREAU AND THE UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND

The NGB and USNORTHCOM have made significant advances in establishing communication mechanisms, in terms of both equipment and procedures, for coordinating the response efforts of federal and state military forces. The initial structures are in place for information exchange via the JIEE and the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN). Procedures to capitalize on these mechanisms are being realized through a number of venues, including the recently signed Strategic Operations Information Sharing Plan of Action.³ Additional first steps include a shared reporting structure that contains the following:

Routine Reports

- NGB daily information push
- Commander's Situational Update Slides
- NGB SITREPs
- NGB Spot Reports
- Operation Jump Start Reports
- Civil-Support Team (CST) Status
- CERFP⁴ Status
- Equipment Status
- Hurricane Preparedness Slides

Contingency Reports

- JFHQ⁵ State SITREPs
- State Spot Reports
- EMAC Status from State to State
- Equipment within the State
- Air Frame Numbers and Capabilities

An ultimate goal should be to standardize reporting formats and systems for both “push and pull” information processes. As an extension of these desires, the NGB and USNORTHCOM's Command, Control, Communications and Computers Directorates (J6) have established routine video-conference (VTC) links which will prove valuable to coordination efforts in times of natural or manmade crises. Additionally, USNORTHCOM and the NGB have worked together to procure specialized Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) equipment which enables first responders operating on different frequencies to communicate with each other through DoD systems. Paralleling this effort, USNORTHCOM, FEMA and the NGB have jointly procured 24 cell phone towers which provide the capability to re-establish cell phone communication in an affected area when commercial assets are inoperable.

THE BUREAU, THE JOINT STAFF, AND THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

A new NGB charter (DODD 5105.77) released in May of this year, along with a host of other initiatives to improve communication, coordination, and reporting mechanisms, highlights the need to update an existing Memorandum of Agreement between USNORTHCOM and the NGB. This charter establishes dual reporting chains for the NGB—one through the Army and Air Force Service Secretaries to the Secretary of Defense, and the other through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense. This will invariably result in some initial turmoil as the Bureau charts new ground with their participation in the Department's Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution System (PPBES). Once dependent on the Departments of the Army and Air Force to husband the Guard's requirements, participants in the forum held that the Bureau would have to step out as its own champion, particularly surrounding requirements designed to meet Civil Support functions. The charter does not spell out how the Bureau will enter into the PPBES process, but some workshop members held that an approach mirroring the Combatant Commanders' Integrated Priority List (IPL) process could sufficiently address unmet needs of the states' Army and Air National Guard requirements.

From an operational perspective, workshop members held that new reporting systems would have to be established from the Bureau to both the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Staff to better facilitate visibility, awareness, and support in responding to crises. These systems and linkages would parallel those established for command, control, cooperation and coordination with USNORTHCOM. Simultaneously, the links would keep the Secretary of Defense fully apprised of Title 32 and State Active Duty incident response operations, if and when Title 10 forces are not

3. Strategic Operations Information Sharing Plan of Action, http://www.ngb.army.mil/features/HomelandDefense/jccse/JCCSE_Fact_Sheet.doc

4. CBRNE Emergency Response Force Packages

5. Joint Force Headquarters

employed. Time constraints, once again, prevented the symposium's participants from a more detailed examination of these requirements. Nevertheless, the forum was unanimous in recognizing that this kind of reporting will require adept staff coordination, and strong relationships, to keep all informed and none offended as the NGB stretches to influence ongoing interagency crisis support planning.

In influencing the planning process, several attendees thought the Chief of the National Guard Bureau (CNGB) should submit strategic plans to SECDEF similar to the services' and those provided by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Once these planning and programming processes are in place, CNGB could formalize the process of reporting capabilities and shortfalls to OSD. As the role of the Bureau matures and evolves members of the forum anticipate a need to clarify and delineate responsibilities and interaction responsibilities between the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs (OASD-HDASA) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. Through these and other offices in the Pentagon, the Bureau would be expected to offer greater assistance toward interagency coordination in response to domestic crises. Particularly in their role as a conduit for guidance to and from the states, the NGB may be the entity best postured to help bridge gaps in facilitating interagency and intergovernmental coordination between state and federal mission partners.

CONCLUSION

With the publication of its new charter, the NGB has been empowered with greater access, greater representation, and greater responsibility. Commensurate with all three, however, is a clear necessity for greater coordination between the Bureau and the states' National Guard, in order to provide for a rapid, integrated response in times of crises. For large-scale domestic incidents, the NGB's integrated planning with and through the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and USNORTHCOM should help in providing a streamlined integration of federal assets when and where they are needed most. Planning should take place far ahead of the requirement, followed by comprehensive programming and budgeting to ensure an effective integration of capabilities between all stakeholders. Finally, the Bureau, as a component of the military's support to civilian authorities, must work to exercise these concepts, to ensure that the envisioned ways and means designed to meet domestic response requirements are, indeed, sufficient to the task.

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U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Center for Strategic Leadership
650 Wright Avenue
Carlisle, PA 17103-5049